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U.S. CHARGES VIOLENT ALBANIAN ORGANIZED CRIME GROUP
IN GROUNDBREAKING RACKETEERING INDICTMENT

DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, PASQUALE D'AMURO, the Assistant Director in Charge of the New York Office of the FBI, JEANINE PIRRO, Westchester County District Attorney, and WAYNE BENNETT, Superintendent of the New York State Police, announced today the unsealing of an Indictment in Manhattan federal court charging 22 defendants for their participation in a violent organized crime enterprise known as the Rudaj Organization, which is named after one of its alleged leaders, ALEX RUDAJ. The members and associates of the Rudaj Organization are alleged to have committed numerous crimes in the Bronx, Westchester County, and Astoria, Queens, including racketeering offenses ("RICO"), attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder, extortion, conspiracy to commit

extortion, loansharking, extortionate debt collection, conspiracy to use extortionate means to collect extensions of credit, and operation of a large-scale illegal gambling business, which consisted of a network of illegal gambling parlors, numerous gambling machines devoted to illegal gambling activities, and a bookmaking operation (the "RICO Indictment"). In connection with the unsealing of the RICO Indictment, the Government also executed 13 search warrants at various illegal gambling locations in the Bronx, Westchester, and Queens, all of which were affiliated with the Rudaj Organization. During the execution of the search warrants and the arrests of the defendants, the FBI and State Police recovered numerous gambling machines and at least four guns. It is believed that this is the first federal racketeering case in the United States to charge an Albanian organized crime enterprise.

The RICO Indictment charges that the Rudaj Organization regularly used violence in order to achieve its goals. In particular, two of the leaders of the Rudaj Organization, ALEX RUDAJ and NARDINO COLOTTI, are charged with attempted murder and conspiracy to commit murder. In addition, several members and associates of the Rudaj Organization are charged with violent assaults in connection with the Organization's control of gambling rackets in Astoria, Queens. The RICO Indictment seeks forfeiture of \$5,755,000, reflecting the lucrative nature of the Organization's dealings.

In addition, Mr. KELLEY, Mr. D'AMURO, Ms. PIRRO, and Mr. BENNETT announced the unsealing of a second superseding indictment in Manhattan federal court, charging six defendants with a variety of crimes taking place largely in the Bronx and Westchester County, including conspiracy to commit robbery, attempted robbery, conspiracy to commit extortion, extortion, attempted extortion, firearms offenses, conspiracy to collect and the collection of extensions of credit by extortionate means, and conspiracy to transport stolen property interstate (the "Robbery Indictment").

The RICO Indictment

The RICO Indictment alleges that seven of the defendants, ALEX RUDAJ, a/k/a "Sandro Rudovic," a/k/a "Uncle," a/k/a "Allie Boy," NARDINO COLOTTI, a/k/a "Leonardo," a/k/a "Lenny," NIKOLA DEDAJ, a/k/a "Big Nick," a/k/a "Nicky Nails," PRENKA IVEZAJ, a/k/a "Frankie," a/k/a "Big Frank," LJUSA NUCULOVIC, a/k/a "Louie," ANGELO DIPIETRO, a/k/a "Fat Angelo," and GJELOSH LELCAJ, a/k/a "Joey," (the "RICO Defendants"), were members and associates of an organized criminal enterprise (the "Rudaj Organization").

The RICO Indictment also charges that Defendants RUDAJ, COLOTTI, and DEDAJ were the primary leaders of the Rudaj Organization, and were responsible for, among other things, supervising the criminal activities of the other members of the Rudaj Organization, providing them with support and protection, and

resolving disputes with other organized criminal groups in the New York City area. Specifically, the RICO Indictment alleges that when disputes arose between the Rudaj Organization and other criminal enterprises in the New York City area, including Mafia Families, the leaders of the Rudaj Organization would be called upon to resolve these disputes. In some instances, the leaders of the Rudaj Organization allegedly resolved disputes by allocating territory among the competing criminal groups. In other instances, the leaders of the Rudaj Organization allegedly resolved disputes by using threats of violence and actual violence against the members and associates of other criminal groups. In those instances where the leaders of the Rudaj Organization resorted to violence, the RICO Indictment alleges that the members and associates of the Rudaj Organization frequently carried and brandished firearms.

The RICO Indictment further charges that PRENKA IVEZAJ, a/k/a "Frankie," a/k/a "Big Frank," LJUSA NUCULOVIC, a/k/a "Louie," ANGELO DIPIETRO, a/k/a "Fat Angelo," and GJELOSH LELCAJ, a/k/a "Joey," were members and associates of the Rudaj Organization. Among their alleged criminal activities were participation in the extortion of money from persons and businesses, the use of extortionate means to collect extensions of credit from persons and businesses, and the operation of illegal gambling businesses.

PRENKA IVEZAJ, LJUSA NUCULOVIC, ANGELO DIPIETRO, and GJELOSH LELCAJ allegedly received some of the illegal earnings of the Rudaj Organization as payment for their participation in the criminal activities of the Rudaj Organization.

The RICO Indictment further alleges that the RICO Defendants, as part of their pattern of racketeering activity, used violence to seize control of illegal gambling in Astoria, Queens, in or about 2001.

The RICO Indictment charges ten separate acts of racketeering activity in two counts, including, among other crimes, a conspiracy to murder and the attempted murder of an individual ("Victim-1") in December 1993, a conspiracy to operate and the widespread operation of a lucrative illegal gambling business, the conspiracy to commit extortion and the extortion of various victims, the conspiracy to use and the use of extortionate means to collect extensions of credit to various victims, and the making of extortionate extensions of credit to various victims.

The RICO Indictment also charges two counts of assault in aid of racketeering, in connection with the Rudaj Organization's violent activities in furtherance of its enterprise. Specifically, the RICO Indictment charges that, to maintain and increase their positions in the Rudaj Organization, Defendants RUDAJ, COLOTTI, and

DEDAJ assaulted an individual with a firearm in 1999 by pointing it at the individual's face. In addition, the RICO Indictment charges that Defendants RUDAJ, COLOTTI, DEDAJ, IVEZAJ, LJUSA NUCULOVIC, ANGELO DIPIETRO, and LELCAJ, assaulted an individual at a rival gambling club called "Soccer Fever" in 2001 by striking him in the head with a firearm, as part of the RICO Defendants' efforts to effect a takeover of illegal gambling in Astoria, Queens.

In addition to the racketeering charges, all twenty-two defendants listed in the RICO Indictment are charged with participating in a conspiracy to conduct and operate an illegal gambling business, and with operation of an illegal gambling business. In addition to the RICO Defendants, those charged in the gambling counts include MIRI PATANI, a/k/a "Saverio Valente," PAUL NUCULOVIC, a/k/a "Paulie," NIKOLA NUCULOVIC, a/k/a "Nicky," JOSEPH GENUA, JOSEPH BONGIOVANNI, a/k/a "Joe Bong," PAUL AVITABLE, a/k/a "Shad the Rooster," ANTHONY DIPIETRO, a/k/a "Ant," NIKOLAOS MICHALOPOULOS, a/k/a "Kefala," LEFTERIS KATSIGIANNIS, SPIROS KARAGIANNIS, IOANNIS KARAGIANNIS, a/k/a "John," PETROS PANTAZIS, KOSTAS PANZIALIS, GREGORY KOMMATAS, and SHEIKH ABDUL SHAKOOR, a/k/a "Shaku."

As described in the RICO Indictment, the gambling business charged was in operation from at least 1993 to October

2004, and spanned various locations in the Bronx, Westchester County, and Astoria, Queens. The RICO Indictment alleges that certain of the defendants would provide "protection" for illegal gambling clubs and collect protection payments from such clubs on a regular basis. Other defendants would directly supervise illegal gambling activities at gambling clubs, it is alleged. The RICO Indictment also alleges that the defendants operated a network of more than fifty illegal gambling machines, and that certain of the defendants would regularly make collections of the proceeds from such machines. Moreover, some of the defendants allegedly operated a sports bookmaking operation, and others provided financial backing for a sports bookmaking business. Finally, some of the defendants allegedly beat various individuals in order to assert their control over illegal gambling businesses. In addition to the above charges, Defendants RUDAJ, COLOTTI, DEDAJ, IVEZAJ, LJUSANUCULOVIC, ANGELO DIPIETRO, and LELCAJ are charged in the RICO Indictment with using and carrying a firearm in connection with a crime of violence.

Finally, the RICO Indictment includes three forfeiture allegations, indicating that the United States will seek criminal forfeiture of criminal proceeds and properties owned by certain of the defendants in the event the Government obtains convictions for

the offenses charged. The forfeiture allegations specifically identified four properties, three in the Bronx and one in Queens, that are subject to criminal forfeiture. In addition to the properties sought, the RICO Indictment seeks forfeiture in the total amount of \$5,755,000 from the RICO Defendants, and \$3,415,000 from all of the defendants, based on the gambling allegations.

The Robbery Indictment

ANGELO DIPIETRO, JOSEPH GENUA, ANGELO CAPALBO, a/k/a "Angelina," MICHAEL PIZZUTI, HAROLD BRINGMAN, and NICOLA MURDOCCA, a/k/a "Nick," are charged in the Robbery Indictment. Two of the defendants in the Robbery Indictment, ANGELO DIPIETRO and JOSEPH GENUA, are also defendants in the RICO Indictment.

If convicted of the charges in the RICO Indictment unsealed today, Defendants RUDAJ, COLOTTI, DEDAJ, IVEZAJ, LJUSA NUCULOVIC, ANGELO DIPIETRO and LELCAJ each faces, among other penalties, a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. Defendants PATANI, PAUL NUCULOVIC, NIKOLA NUCULOVIC, JOSEPH GENUA, JOSEPH BONGIOVANNI, PAUL AVITABLE, ANTHONY DIPIETRO, NIKOLAOS MICHALOPOULOS, LEFTERIS KATSIGIANNIS, SPIROS KARAGIANNIS, IOANNIS KARAGIANNIS, PETROS PANTAZIS, KOSTAS PANZIALIS, GREGORY KOMMATAS, and SHEIK ABDUL SHAKOOR each faces, among other penalties, a maximum sentence of ten years' imprisonment if convicted.

If convicted of the charges in the Robbery Indictment unsealed today, Defendants ANGELO DIPIETRO, CAPALBO, and PIZZUTI each faces, among other penalties, a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, in addition to the penalties ANGELO DIPIETRO faces pursuant to the RICO Indictment. Defendant BRINGMAN faces, among other penalties, a maximum sentence of forty years' imprisonment if convicted. Defendant MURDOCCA faces, among other penalties, a maximum sentence of twenty years' imprisonment if convicted. If convicted of the charges in the Robbery Indictment, Defendant GENUA faces a maximum sentence of forty years' imprisonment, in addition to the penalties GENUA faces relating to the RICO Indictment.

RICO Defendants RUDAJ, COLOTTI, DEDAJ, IVEZAJ, LJUSA NUCULOVIC, PAUL NUCULOVIC, NIKOLA NUCULOVIC, JOSEPH GENUA, JOSEPH BONGIOVANNI, PAUL AVITABLE, ANTHONY DIPIETRO, NIKOLAOS MICHALOPOULOS, LEFTERIS KATSIGIANNIS, PETROS PANTAZIS, KOSTAS PANZIALIS, GREGORY KOMMATAS, and SHEIK ABDUL SHAKOOR were arrested this morning. Defendant ANGELO DIPIETRO was already in custody in connection with the case resulting in the Robbery Indictment.

Robbery Indictment Defendants CAPALBO, PIZZUTI, BRINGMAN, MURDOCCA, and GENUA (as indicated above) were arrested this morning. The Robbery Defendants are scheduled to be arraigned on

the Robbery Indictment in Manhattan federal court before US District Judge SHIRLEY WOHL KRAM.

Defendant RUDAJ, 37, lives in Yorktown Heights, New York. Defendant COLOTTI, 42, lives in the Bronx, New York. Defendant DEDAJ, 41, lives in Yonkers, New York. Defendant LJUSA NUCULOVIC, 46, lives in Hopewell Junction, New York. Defendant IVEZAJ, 39, lives in Queens, New York. Defendant ANGELO DIPIETRO, 47, lives in Hopewell Junction, New York, but is currently detained pending trial at the Metropolitan Detention Center, Brooklyn, New York in connection with the case leading to the Robbery Indictment. Defendant LELCAJ, 30, currently lives in the Bronx, New York.

Mr. KELLEY praised the efforts of the FBI, the Westchester County District Attorney's Office, and the New York State Police in this investigation. Mr. KELLEY indicated that the investigations in both cases are continuing.

Assistant United States Attorneys TIMOTHY J. TREANOR, JENNIFER G. RODGERS, and BRIAN R. MICHAEL, and Special Assistant United States Attorney FRANK PRIOLO are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the RICO Indictment and the Robbery Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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